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Movie likely to slam Southern Baptists

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — A fictional theatrical production about four homosexual men raised in Southern Baptist churches will soon become a motion picture, Baptist Press has learned.

Production on the film, entitled Southern Baptist Sissies, will begin in the summer of 2007, according to the author of the play and the film's producer, Del Shores.

Tim Wilkins, a Southern Baptist minister and founder of Cross Ministry, an outreach to homosexuals, said the upcoming movie likely will lead secular audiences to conclude that evangelical Christians are "shallow thinkers and inept." Even so, he said Southern Baptists would "do well to respond to the movie with little if any fanfare."

"I think the more attention focused on the movie will simply improve its visibility and increase the attendance at theaters across the country," Wilkins, himself a former homosexual, said. "This forthcoming movie is part of a chain of events that has taken place over the past 15-20 years, and by that I mean secular society and the pro-homosexual movement making a statement and Southern Baptists being automatically placed in a position of responding to that statement — which is exactly where we should not be."

Wilkins said Southern Baptists should "take the offense without being offensive."

"By that I mean a proactive, redemptive outreach to those with same-sex attractions is far better than a month by month response to what the world is telling us about homosexuality," he said.

Southern Baptists have made efforts in this regard. At their annual meeting in New Orleans in 2001, messengers adopted a resolution requesting that the convention "establish a task force to inform, educate and encourage our people to be

proactive and redemptive in reaching out to those who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions."

The task force reported to the SBC at its annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn., four years later, the same year that Southern Baptists dropped their boycott of the Disney Company.

At the time, Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said that, while Southern Baptists remained true to the Bible's teaching on human sexuality — which is sexual intimacy between a man and a woman within a marriage — they would not condemn homosexuals.

"Christians loving homosexuals without accepting their lifestyle is the way we can be most helpful in helping homosexuals to be liberated from that lifestyle," Land said.

A longtime television writer, Shores previously wrote and produced the play Sordid Lives, billed as a "black comedy about white trash." When that play was developed into a motion picture, it performed poorly at the box office, earning only \$1.1 million nationally.

Shores also has written multiple episodes of Queer as Folk, a cable television drama about the lives of homosexuals.

Southern Baptist Sissies is Shores' most recent play and currently is on tour across the country. Performances have been held in Dallas, St. Louis, and Tacoma, Wash., and are scheduled this

November in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and Nashville, Tenn., where several Southern Baptist entities have their headquarters.

Internet-based promotional material for the play depicts a scantily-clad young man with his arms outstretched as if crucified, with a cross in the background. The promotional material includes a warning that the play contains nudity.

Delta Burke, an actress best known for her role as Suzanne Sugarbaker on the television series Designing Women, has a starring role in the play. Burke is married to actor

Gerald McRaney, a native of Collins. McRaney starred in the television series Simon and Simon, and Major Dad.

Shores, in an interview, said Southern Baptist Sissies, which won an award from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), is about "love and acceptance" for homosexuals who "have felt excluded from the church, from the love of God because of the teachings and doctrines that were taught to us as children and beyond."

Shores, a homosexual activist, has said he was raised in a Southern Baptist church in Texas and attended Baylor University in Waco, which is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. He described his play as ending "with the message of hope — that God loves us all, just as He created us."

While the theme that God creates people to be homosexuals likely will be promoted in the film, it is unfounded, said Michael Dean, pastor of Travis Avenue Church in Fort Worth, the site of a recent seminar on what the Bible says about homosexuality.

"The viewpoint that homosexual behavior is 'natural' for some persons cannot be supported by Scripture," Dean said, noting that the behavior is regarded as sinful in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

"(E)ven if it were discovered that there is a genetic predisposition to homosexuality, that would not remove the sinfulness of the expressed behavior. Heterosexual desires are 'natural,' but are also sinful when expressed outside of a biblically defined marriage between a man and a woman."

The Baptist Faith and Message, the faith statement of the Southern Baptist Convention as adopted by messengers to the convention, states in its article on The Christian and the Social Order that Christians should oppose "all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography."



Shores



Wilkins

Carley to join MBCB Collegiate Ministry Dept.

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Christy Carley, currently the Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton, will become the new associate in the Collegiate Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), effective January 1.

"Christy will take primary responsibility for many of the traditional assignments that the associate position has handled in the past, including student missions, leadership development, and international ministry. She will take on additional responsibilities in the area of church relations," said Weaver McCracken, collegiate ministry director at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Carley holds degrees from Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth (M.Div.) and Mississippi State University in

Starkville (B.A. in Communications). She has been BSU director at MC for eight years, and prior to that was interim college minister at Wedgwood Church in Ft. Worth.

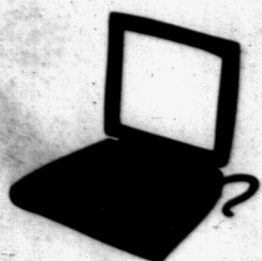
She has also served as director of Gulfshore Assembly Youth Weeks, BSU director at Holmes Community College in Goodman, BSU intern at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, and field supervisor for International Mission Board summer missionaries in the Pacific Rim region.

"I believe that the university years are extremely formative years in the life of an individual... It is my desire to guide and challenge students to be the men and women God created them to be during this stage of their lives, with the prayer that they will be used to further the Kingdom of God long after leaving the university campus," Carley said.

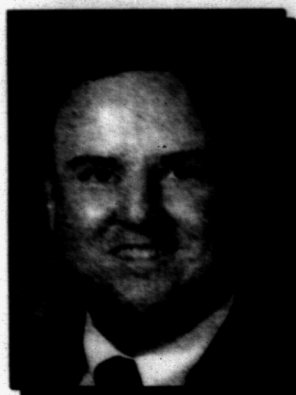
"Please pray for Christy as she closes out her tenure at MC between now and the end of December. I am convinced Christy is called to this position and brings the experience and passion to the table to lead well. I know she will welcome your support and help in the days ahead," McCracken said.



Carley



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

EDITOR
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbcb.org

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Tony Martin
martin@mbcb.org

LAYOUT/DESIGN
Matt Broome
mbroome@mbcb.org

ADVERTISING
Dana Richardson
drichardson@mbcb.org

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Brenda Quattlebaum
bquattlebaum@mbcb.org

EDITOR EMERITUS
Don McGregor

Baptist Record Advisory Committee:

Mack Amis, McComb
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Postmaster:

Send changes of address to: The
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and
address changes to: The Editor,
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800

Fax: (601) 292-3330

E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

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Our Thanksgiving prayer

Among the original American holidays on our calendar, Thanksgiving often harbors our warmest thoughts and deepest sentimentalities.

The World Book Encyclopedia describes it this way: "Thanksgiving is usually a family day, celebrated with big dinners and joyous reunions. The very mention of Thanksgiving often calls up memories of kitchens and pantries crowded with good things to eat. Thanksgiving is also a time for serious thinking, church services, and prayer."

Indeed it is. In our present-day, politically correct/revisionist culture, we can be discouraged from understanding the true meaning of the holiday.

We have lately been induced to believe that Thanksgiving is composed of little more than a bacchanalian orgy and football games, devoid of religious significance. After all, a lot of Americans act that way. Nothing could be farther from the truth, as evidenced by a brief review of unrevised history.

The first Thanksgiving was observed less than a year after the Plymouth colonists came ashore in Massachusetts. The harsh first winter in the New World wiped out nearly half the colonists, but 1621's bumper harvest put an end to the famine and its associated problems.

There was such rejoicing in the colony that the people began to set aside a time of celebration and thanksgiving for their abundance — which they readily acknowledged came from God.

The observance grew so rapidly that Massachusetts Governor William Bradford declared a formal three-day thanksgiving feast to begin on July 30, 1623.

Thanksgiving quickly took root in the other colonies and continued to be observed during the Revolutionary War.

After the Revolutionary War, President George Washington issued a proclamation that codified a special day of thanks in the young United States of America. Most of the states took Washington's lead and adopted their own days of thanksgiving at various times of the year.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared a national Thanksgiving holiday on the last Thursday of November,

and the states soon realigned their observances.

President Franklin Roosevelt set the holiday one week earlier in 1939, to lengthen the Christmas shopping season in the midst of the Great Depression.

The U.S. Congress was not pleased, however, and voted in 1941 to return Thanksgiving to the traditional fourth Thursday in November. They backed up their decision by creating a formal legal holiday on that date.

For thousands of years, people around the world have held harvest festivals and observed thanksgiving times for the gift of God's bounty, but the unique American holiday called Thanksgiving should hold special meaning for us, the modern-day benefactors of God's blessings beyond all forms of measurement.

Our agricultural system feeds us well, with enough left over to feed much of the world. More than at any time in our history, our generation is sheltered from the elements and guarded from disease. Though our military is stretched and many brave men and women are giving their lives even today for our freedoms, we are largely protected from many of the unpleasant realities of the world. When our biggest complaints are about potholes and poorly performing football teams, we're living pretty close to Easy Street.

We make a grave mistake, however, when we take all that for granted and begin to believe that we are responsible for our own good fortune and security (Deuteronomy 8:6-19), as many Americans apparently presume. This Thanksgiving season, be sure to focus your thanks toward the One who provided the food you will eat, the home in which you will eat it, the family with which you will enjoy it, and the means to do all that and much, much more.

Come to think of it, that should be our Thanksgiving prayer 365 days a year.

GUEST OPINION:



Start planning for taxes now!

By Sherre Stephens
GuideStone Financial Resources

Think it's too early to start your tax preparation? A recent flurry of tax legislation and expiring tax credits and deductions that Congress may retroactively extend at year's end calls for early preparation despite a later filing date (April 18, 2007).

Get organized. Start now and use a checklist. Checklists facilitate organization and minimize frustration. Many checklists are available on the Web. Just Google "checklists for tax preparation."

Identify last-minute savings opportunities:

- Maximize retirement plan elective deferrals. The basic deferral limit is \$15,000 (\$20,000 for age 50 or older).

- Contribute to a traditional IRA. The limit for taxpayers younger than 70 1/2 with sufficient income is \$4,000 (\$5,000 for age 50 or older). Consider an IRA for the non-working spouse. To qualify, the couple must be legally married at year's end and file a joint tax return.

- Coordinate capital gains and losses. Review stock and other capital assets. Are some ripe for sale? Such tax harvesting can offset gains with losses thereby lowering taxable net gains.

Make the most of tax deductions:

- Itemize deductions. The list is myriad and some

impose thresholds in order to take the deduction.

- Make a direct transfer from an IRA to a qualified charity. Taxpayers age 70 1/2 and older may transfer up to \$100,000 to a qualified charity tax-free. The transaction must go directly from an IRA to the charity. Don't wait until the last minute. Many IRA providers have cut-off dates for year-end transactions — some as early as Dec. 15.

- Donate clothing and household items. Contributions of clothing and household items made after Aug. 17, 2006, are not deductible unless the property is in good used condition or better.

Take advantage of tax credits. A tax credit reduces tax whereas a deduction reduces

the amount of taxable income:

- Child Tax Credit. This credit can reduce taxes up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child. For more information, see IRS Tax Tip 2006-45.

- Retirement Savings Contributions Credit. Taxpayers eligible to contribute to an employer-sponsored retirement plan or an IRA may qualify for this credit (up to \$1,000 or \$2,000 if filing jointly). See IRS Tax Tip 2006-49.

- Hybrid Car Tax Credit. The credit, \$400 to \$3,400, is available for qualifying vehicles purchased after Dec. 31, 2005.

- Qualifying Alternative Fuel Vehicles. Purchase of an AFV between Jan. 1, 2005 and Dec. 31, 2010 may yield a tax credit of up to \$4,000.

- Home Energy Efficiency Improvement Tax Credits. Purchase and installation of energy efficient products qualify for a tax credit of up to \$500. Additional credit is available for certain other qualified purchases and applies only to the taxpayer's principal U.S. residence. The total credit caps at \$2,000.

- Earned Income Tax Credit. Generally available to taxpayers under \$38,348, the EITC may also provide a refund.

Know where to go for help. The IRS website, www.irs.gov, offers a number of fact sheets, tax tips and a toll-free help number. The Internet offers copious tax helps, but use caution, because some tips may or may not be reliable. Tax preparation software and services are viable resources.

Stephens is a certified employee benefits specialist and director of executive and institutional benefit design for GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. This educational information is not intended as legal or tax advice. Individuals with legal or tax questions should consult a legal or tax adviser who can provide specific information to their unique situation. Stephens' commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Abortion ruling likely in hands of one justice

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The fate of partial-birth abortion as a legally-protected procedure in America may rest with the decision of U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy.

At least, that appears to be the assessment of many observers on both sides of the abortion issue. As goes Kennedy, so goes the Supreme Court in determining whether Congress can outlaw the gruesome mid-pregnancy abortion method, they say.

Kennedy was indeed the focus of attention from reporters and observers as the high court heard oral arguments Nov. 8 in the Bush administration's effort to convince the justices to overturn lower court decisions striking down a 2003 law banning the procedure.

The Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act, which was passed by about two-thirds of both houses of Congress, bans a procedure also known as D&X — dilation and extraction — typically used in the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy and beyond, when the fully-formed baby is too large to dismember and remove from the mother's womb using less invasive procedures.

In the method as normally practiced, an intact baby is delivered feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. The doctor pierces the base of the infant's skull with surgical scissors before inserting a catheter into the opening and suctioning out the brain, killing the baby. The technique provides for easier removal of the baby's head.

Associate Justices John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer, and Sandra Day O'Connor — voted in 2000 to strike down a Nebraska ban on partial-birth abortion. O'Connor has since retired.

Kennedy would appear to be the most likely of the remaining five justices to join them, even though he wrote a strong dissent

in that decision, *Stenberg v. Carhart*. Otherwise, he has sided with abortion-rights defenders on the court in the past.

Associate Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas were in the minority in the earlier case and have indicated no inclination to switch sides. Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito, who replaced O'Connor, are expected to uphold the partial-birth abortion ban based on their records at the appellate level as strict constructionist judges.

After the oral arguments, different observers had different takes on Kennedy's questioning.

"I'm encouraged," said Jordan Lorence, senior counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), a Christian and pro-life legal organization based in Phoenix, Az.

"Justice Kennedy, back in the *Stenberg* case in 2000, was very passionate in his opposition to partial-birth abortion, and although he asked studied questions today, I think that he indicated that he retains basically what he said in that opinion, and nothing dissuaded him."

Colby May, senior counsel for the pro-life American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) based in Washington, D.C., told Baptist Press outside the court building, "I am hopeful that [Kennedy] will follow the same rationale that he provided in his dissent in the *Stenberg* decision, and I think if he does, then we have every reason to be optimistic."

May said he thought the arguments left Kennedy "recognizing that line drawing [by Congress] is something that is appropriate and OK for the government to do, and drawing the line between classical, historical abortion and infanticide is an appropriate line to draw."

Lorence told Baptist Press he thought the "overall dynamic" among the justices during the arguments provided a hopeful



indicator. Alito asked no questions during the two hours, and Scalia, often an active participant, rarely spoke.

"[T]he five that have the votes weren't talking that much, and the ones who seemed like they were really trying to convince a fifth vote to come over were the people who were in the majority in *Stenberg*," Lorence said. "So, in other words, the pro-partial-birth abortion justices seemed to be the ones that were trolling for a fifth vote, and that's a good sign that [the justices] are going to leave this to [Congress]."

Priscilla Smith, who represented Nebraska abortion doctor Leroy Carhart in the arguments, had a different take.

She told reporters the justices "seemed in the end not at all persuaded by the idea that the court should defer to Congress in judgments of these issues, but instead that the court is the ultimate arbiter of the scope of constitutional rights and the court decides when women's rights are being violated ..."

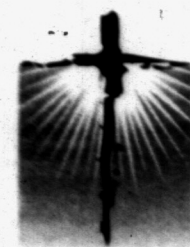
"The court was taking these very, very seriously, and I thought Justice Kennedy, just like the other justices, was paying a great deal of attention to the discussion of the seriousness of the

health risks here, issues about reducing risks of uterine perforation, risks of serious, catastrophic complications and risks to women with particular underlying medical conditions as well."

In his 2000 dissenting opinion, Kennedy said Nebraska "chose to forbid a procedure many decent and civilized people find so abhorrent as to be among the most serious of crimes against human life, while the state still protected the woman's autonomous right of choice as reaffirmed in [the 1992 *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* decision]. The court closes its eyes to these profound concerns."

In two hours of arguments, U.S. Solicitor General Paul Clement did not challenge the high court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* opinion legalizing abortion but urged the court to defer to Congress' findings as reasonable in seeking to prohibit a specific method of abortion.

Congress had an interest "in maintaining a bright line between abortion and infanticide," Clement told the justices. Congress determined after six hearings over four terms "that partial-birth abortions are never medically necessary, pose health risks and should be banned," he said.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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Crusading AG defeated

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP and local reports) — Kansas voters rejected Republican Attorney General Phill Kline in the Nov. 7 election and elected Democrat challenger Paul Morrison in a race marked by controversy swirling around the abortion debate. Kline had been seeking records from the Wichita clinic of George Tiller, the country's best known late-term abortion doctor, and a Planned Parenthood clinic in Overland Park. Kline finally won a court battle and received edited records on 90 patients in late October. The attorney general said at the time the records were being examined for evidence of possible charges for rape, child rape, incest, illegal late-term abortions, and doctors' refusal to report child sex abuse, the Associated Press reported. A spokesperson for NARAL Pro-choice America, a leading abortion rights group, acknowledged the organization sent volunteers to Kansas to help Morrison with his campaign, LifeNews.com reported. The political action committee of Tiller's clinic, Women's Health Care Services, also reported campaign contributions of more than \$304,000 from July 21 to Oct. 26, according to The Wichita Eagle. Despite the crucial assistance from pro-abortion groups and his campaign stance to the contrary, Morrison has said since the election he will likely continue the investigation after he is sworn in.

Looking back

Trustees of William Carey College in Hattiesburg vote to bring the Baptist-affiliated school's charter into compliance with actions taken Oct. 29 by messengers to the 1996 Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Ninety-eight Mission Friends and their leaders from 13 Gulf Coast Association churches meet at the beachfront campus of William Carey College on the Coast for the third Mission Friends Morning. Sue Perry serves as the associational Mission Friends director.

A group of pastors and laymen from 10 Mississippi Baptist churches present D.A. McCall, executive secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, with a biplane, dedicated as "The Gospel Flyer." McCall is a licensed pilot.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

I AM THANKFUL

I am so thankful for all that God has done for me. It is almost impossible to know where to start, and there is no ending point to express my gratitude to Him for all of His amazing provisions, glorious opportunities, gracious consolation, and precious people I have known. Had I been present, I would have encouraged the Psalmist to write a Psalm in the manner he did when he said, "Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me. Bless his holy name" (Ps. 103:1). I am thankful! But sometimes when you are being thankful, it is hard to pinpoint specifics so make yourself a list of things that make your heart glad and for which you can say, "I am so thankful."

I remember years ago we used to sing a hymn that said, "Count your many blessings name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." Sometimes when we were singing, I would try to think about God's blessings and would come up with some generalizations in my own mind for which I was thankful. Other times it was kind of a blur of thankfulness. Here on Thanksgiving week, that wonderful day set aside in our nation when we just pause not to stuff ourselves but to reflect on the generosity and goodness of our God, I pause to contemplate on my blessings. Come walk alongside of me as we think about some of those good things from the Father.

For one thing I am thankful for the unknowns. It may sound a little strange, but I am convinced that we should be thankful for the unknowns in our lives. A number of times I have sat at that sacred and solemn place where the unknown rests at the Tomb of the Unknown in Washington, D.C., to watch the changing of the guard or some special



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

event. Over a million soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen have given their lives protecting us and providing our continued freedom. Trained men left their families, jobs, and homeland and courageously fought and never returned. I have known some of them, but many of them are unknown to me. Still I should be no less grateful because they gave the full measure of sacrifice and made much of what I enjoy and experience possible.

It is not only those unknowns but many others. Through work, sacrifice, concern, and dedication there are people who have provided things that you and I take for granted. I think of the scholarship I received in college that was started by a family in memory of their son who had been killed in an accident. I never met him, but his influence through them to me and others made a difference. Strange, isn't it, how many of us are immensely blessed by people who are the unknowns? It is like it was in the book of Genesis when a whole nation and a region of the world had been saved by the good and godly acts of one man named Joseph and then a generation rose up who knew not Joseph. It is not always easy to look back over your life and ferret out all of the teachers, leaders, and great common folk who have touched your life and made a difference. But for those whose faces I never saw and whose names I never knew but whose deeds blessed my life, I pause to say, "I am thankful."

A second thing for which I give thanks is the *kind tones*. I am referring to those folks who time and again have an encouraging, positive, gentle but uplifting way about them that seems to lace life with blessings. I don't know about you, but it is those folks who even without knowing it always seem to brighten any room when they enter. Their presence spreads peace in the world, and their very spirit-filled demeanor keeps making a difference in a weird and warped society. By contrast you may know of someone who always seems to be on the edge of explosion. Their emotions are always charged with anger. Their face is shaped by a scowl, and their words seem to be arranged in such a way that they always just suck the oxygen out of a room. You probably would choose not to spend most of your life around them. The folks with the *kind tones* are the people who do more than just memorize the Scripture; they seem to have it filtering through their lives. In Ephesians Paul instructed the folks to, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ sake has forgiven us" (Eph. 4:32). The blessing for me is that with almost no thought I can name you dozens of people I have had the privilege of knowing, working with, socializing with, laughing with, and walking the journey of life alongside of who are those kind of people, and so I say, "I am thankful."

A final note of my song of thanksgiving would be how thankful I am for the *sure stone*. I am speaking of those things that God Himself has given us that are solid, sure, foundational, bedrock, and dependable truths. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said to His disciples, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In a world that is constantly changing in the strangest and often ungodly ways, there are some things that we can depend upon. The truth that we hold to is unchanging, for it is anchored in the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In our world what seemed to be true last year, or in the last session of Congress, or in the latest decision of the Supreme Court may not be the same just down the road. It is circumstantial truth or transitional truth.

So where in the world can a young person turn today and find something to hold on to that is real, right, and will not be ripped away from their heart? It all begins with a personal relationship with the unshakable, ever solid Savior, our Lord Jesus. When the winds blow, or the floods come, or the fire of trials fall upon us we can depend upon Him. A great hymn writer said it right and glorious when he penned the words, "On Christ, the solid Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand." You can depend on our Lord Jesus. You can trust His unwavering Word to us. We can be confident and live our lives joyously resting on an unshakable faith in our loving Savior. To walk with Him and be anchored to His steadfastness enables us even in our world to say like Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). So with a full heart I reaffirm, "I am thankful."

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

'Gay penguins' story highlights homosexual hypocrisy

CHICAGO (BP) — A children's book based on a true story about two "gay penguins" is causing concern from parents in several schools and towns nationwide, and thus far the controversy largely has ignored an important fact — the penguins long ago split up, with one of them going on to nest with the opposite sex.

The book, *And Tango Makes Three*, is a colorful illustrated children's book about two male penguins, Roy and Silo, who began nesting together at New York's Central Park Zoo about seven years ago. After being together for several years, they were given a fertilized egg, which they incubated until it hatched. The new penguin was named "Tango."

According to the Associated Press (AP), a five-year-old student at Shiloh (Ill.) Elementary School brought the book home from the school library and asked her mother, Lilly Del Pinto, to read it to her. Del Pinto thought the

book was "pretty and beautiful," although her positive thoughts about the book were short-lived. Halfway through the book, she discovered the two penguins were in love.

"That's when I ended the story," she told AP. "Of course, we know the kids eventually are going to learn about the homosexual lifestyle. That's not the issue. Please let us decide when our kids are ready. Please let us parent our kids."

School superintendent Jennifer Filyaw said the book is "adorable" and age-appropriate, AP said.

"My feeling is that a library is to serve an entire population," Filyaw said. "It means you represent different families in a society — different religions, different beliefs. That's the role of a school library."

The book also caused a stir in a Missouri town, AP reported.

In real life, Silo left Roy more than a year ago. It seems Silo began nesting with a female penguin named Scrappy, who had been transferred to New York

from SeaWorld in San Diego, the New York Post first reported.

Although the six-year relationship between Silo and Roy made headlines nationwide, the breakup was mentioned far less. The book was published before the two penguins split.

Warren Throckmorton, associate professor of psychology at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, joked that Silo was the "world's first ex-gay penguin."

"At times gay activists will use the animal kingdom to support the link between naturalism and human sexuality, and yet when Silo ... took up with a female penguin, the gay activists were downplaying the importance of that," Throckmorton told Baptist Press. "... You can't have it both ways. It either means something or it doesn't."

Several years ago, when the news about Roy and Silo's "gay relationship broke," liberal activists quickly pointed to it as a supporting argument for "gay marriage" in the human world.

"[I]f Roy and Silo can do it, why can't humans?" Gersh Kuntzman of the New York Post wrote in an online March 2004 column at Newsweek's website. "Indeed, if homosexual marriages exist in the animal kingdom, they must be normal."

Throckmorton said neither side of the "gay marriage" debate should "read too much into" the relationship between Roy and Silo — whether the two penguins are together or apart. Indeed, there are reports of other "same-sex penguins" in the Central Park Zoo.

There are "numerous" instances of animal behavior that shouldn't be emulated, he said.

"What we shouldn't do is commit the naturalistic fallacy that if it's natural then it's morally acceptable," Throckmorton said. "I don't get my moral reasoning from watching the barnyard. I get my moral compass from other places. If I want to know what's moral, I go to church. I don't go to the barnyard."

'Let the Fire Fall' is 2006 Pastors' Conference theme

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The 2006 Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference, traditionally held the day before the start of the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, convened on October 30 in the Sanctuary of First Church, Jackson, with a greeting from conference President Joe Turner, pastor of First Church, Horn Lake.

"Our theme this year is, 'Let the Fire Fall.' It is based on 1 Kings 18:24," Turner wrote on the conference program's welcome page. "We desire for God to stir our hearts and give us a fresh vision for our place of service. The fire is going to fall on America. I pray the fire will fall in revival and not in judgment."

Preaching from Deuteronomy Chapters 11 and 28, Jim Butler kicked off the afternoon session by declaring, "God is reminding us that before... our nation is a choice, and that choice has consequences." Butler, pastor of Village Church in Oklahoma City, is the former pastor of Trinity Church, Southaven.

James Merritt, pastor of Crosspointe Church in Duluth, Ga., and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, preached from 1 Kings 18:21-40. "Don't be afraid of fake gods," he said. "If you're going to stand for the true God, you have to stand against the false gods."

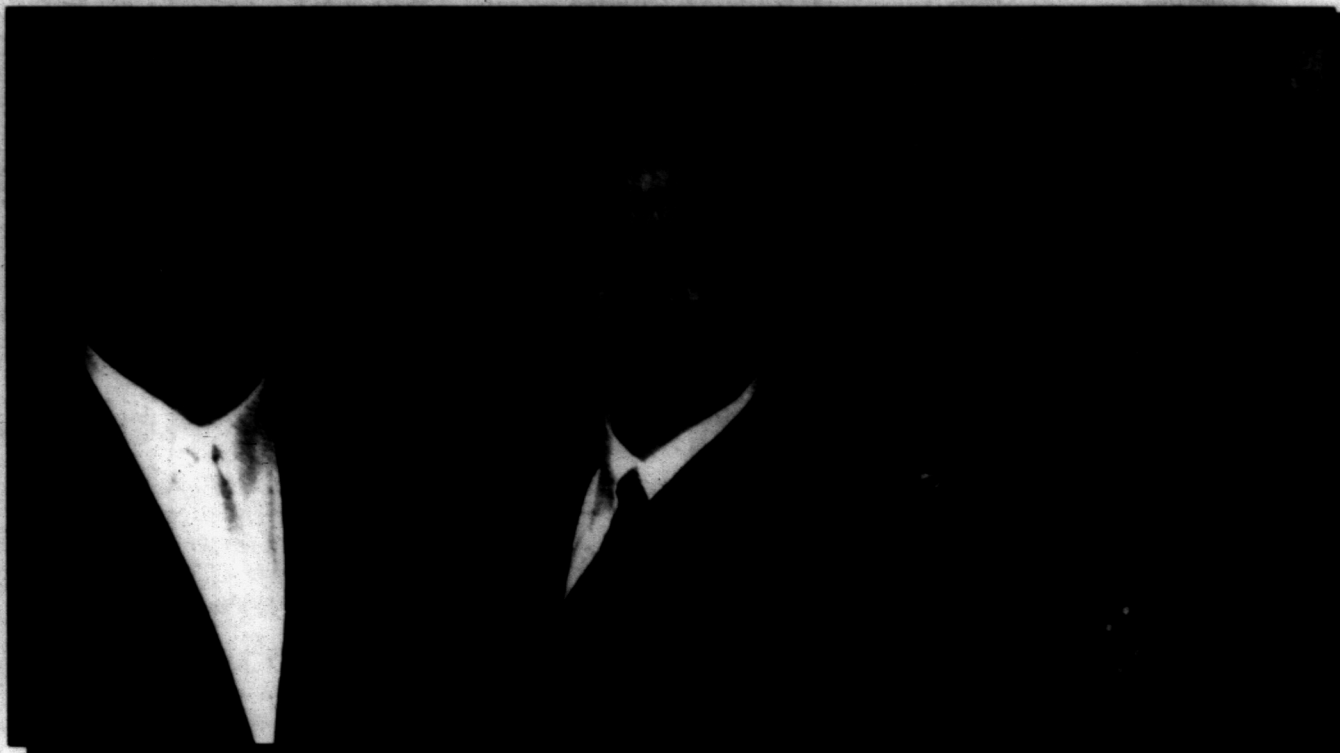
Fred Wolfe, former pastor of Dauphin Way Church in Mobile, Al., closed the afternoon session with a sermon on the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 as his subject. "You know why I love Luke 15? It reveals the heart of God," Wolfe said.

Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tn., opened the evening session with the story of Jesus casting demons into swine to illustrate that even evil spirits recognized Jesus as the Son of God. "People ask me when I'm preaching, 'Why do you shout?' What better have you got to shout about (than Jesus)?" he asked.

"If the church is to stand, Jesus must be at the foundation," said Fred Luter, preaching from Matthew 16:13-19. Luter is pastor of Franklin Road Church in New Orleans.

Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Church, Woodstock, Ga., closed out the evening session with a sermon from Acts 19:11. "We may not be able to do much with our own hands, but we can give them to God and He can use them," he said.

Conference attendees tapped Tony Lambert, pastor of Crossgates Church, Brandon, as president-elect. He was elected by acclamation after being nominated by Dean Register, pastor of Temple Church, Hattiesburg.



PASTOR'S CONFERENCE OFFICERS — Shannon Marshall (center), pastor of Steep Hollow Church, Poplarville, will serve as 2006-07 president of the Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference, succeeding Joe Turner (left), pastor of First Church, Horn Lake. Tony Lambert (right) was chosen as the conference's president-elect. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Shannon Marshall, pastor of Steep Hollow Church, Poplarville, moved from president-elect to succeed Turner as conference president. Joe Caldwell, pastor of Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, served this year as conference treasurer.

Worship for the 2006 conference was directed by Greg Sims, minister

of worship at First Church, Horn Lake. The church's Celebration Choir, Praise and Worship Team, and Holy Ground Youth Drama Team also performed at the conference.

The 2007 Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference is scheduled for October 29 at First Church, Jackson.

Students plant special seeds during African mission trips

SENEGAL, West Africa (BP) — Passersby called out every few minutes, wishing a good day to the American college students working in the West African field.

Sometimes the people stopped to help. Knowing the work needed to be completed before the rains came, they took the hoes from the American volunteers and weeded the rest of the row.

"It is very humbling how dependent they are on the land," said Brian Matlock, director of the Baptist Student Ministry at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. "We never have had to be dependent on the rain; we always have food at the grocery store."

After seven days of weeding peanut and cotton fields with hand-held hoes, five collegians from Arkansas had sore muscles and large raw blisters on their hands — but the fields were ready for rainy season. The farmer, John Pierre, was able to fertilize his plants before the heavy rains came.

Pierre is the first believer in his village. This group from Arkansas Student Ministries (ASM) is the third team to come and disciple Pierre in his new faith and to encourage him to share with his neighbors.

ASM adopted the Konyagui people in 2005, and Matlock took the first vision trip last January to meet the people and plan future trips. It was during that first visit that Pierre became a believer in Christ.

The Arkansas team returned to Senegal to model their walk with Jesus and to disciple Pierre. They spent each morning working in the fields and the afternoon rest time talking about the Bible with Pierre, his family and friends.

One afternoon the team took out a storying cloth, which uses pictures to demonstrate Bible stories from creation through Jesus' resurrection. The group took turns telling stories to Pierre and his family, with an interpreter translating English into French.

Pierre's wife and daughters, who do not speak French, later asked him if the beautiful cloth was a head wrap. "No," he said, "it is the story of Jesus" and began telling them the stories in Konyagui.

That evening, Pierre also shared his faith with a Muslim friend, who asked, "How can you share religious things since you are not a priest?"



PREPARING THE GROUND — Arkansas Baptist Student Ministry volunteer Brian Matlock (right) helps John Pierre, a new believer in West Africa, weed his garden in the west African nation of Senegal. Volunteer team members spent seven days helping local residents weed peanut and cotton fields in preparation for the rainy season. (BP photo)

Pierre answered, "These things are in the Bible and anyone can have knowledge about Jesus and tell others." He went on to tell the story in Acts of the 3,000 people coming to faith, being baptized and selling their possessions to help others.

"There are many stories in the Bible, and anyone can read the Bible," Pierre said, giving his Bible to the Muslim man to read.

The student volunteers now see the need among the Konyagui people for more workers to come and share their faith. "It has given me a whole new view on the vast number of people who need to be reached with the Gospel," Bailey Rahourn, a student at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, said. "In America, every corner you turn there is a church. Here, every corner you turn [there] is a mosque."

Tim McKelvy, a student at the University of Central Arkansas, saw Pierre soak up the words and knowledge of the Bible.

Now, Pierre says, he is ready to follow the Americans' example and share his faith. He even talked about working in his neighbors' fields, so that when they ask why he is helping he can tell them about Jesus.

"I desire to be like the people who share their faith; we must share what we have with one another," Pierre said to the volunteers, who came not knowing the language but learning phrases to help share their faith. "This compels me to go forward; it removes my fear of sharing."

"When you live out here, you see the Bible come alive. More than that, you get the chance to live out God's Word," said International Mission Board missionary Aaron Mills, who helped the volunteers. "When the students worked in the fields, the Konyagui equated that back to the Acts church. Just as the Acts believers sold their possessions to help out others, so the students gave up their time and traveled a great distance to help in the fields."

Pierre's oldest son Kristoph worked and talked with the Arkansas group throughout their visit. One afternoon he brought out his Bible and said, "We see these things in you," referring to Scripture he had learned.

"It was evident that the love of Christ was shining through the students for the Konyagui to see," Mills said.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Baby Dedication, High Hill Church, Neshoba County



2. Deacon Ordinations, Corinth Church, Purvis



3. Spotts honored, Bartahatchie Church, Monroe County



4. Buckley Licensed to Ministry, First Church, Ripley



5. Mission Friends, McAdams Church, McAdams

1. High Hill Church, Neshoba County, held its baby dedication day Oct. 29. Ray Files, pastor. Shown are the participants.

2. Corinth Church, Purvis, recently ordained Harold Hudson and Cliff Miller as deacons. Shown are pastor Brad Ford, Hudson, and Miller.

3. Milton Spotts, pastor of Bartahatchie Church, Monroe County, was honored with a wMu sponsored appreciation luncheon Oct. 22. Shown are the participants.

4. First Church, Ripley, licensed Charles Buckley to the ministry Oct. 22. Shown are transitional pastor P.J. Scott, Buckley, Joe Stewart, and Tom Young.

5. The Mission Friends of McAdams Church, McAdams, recently celebrated a birthday party for 110 years of Mission Friends. Shown are Jeffery Jones, Morgan Pickle, Katie Moss, Anna Carol Gowan, Chloe Cloiningier, Katie Grace Jones, and Katelynn Miller.

6. Ebenezer Church, Liberty, ordained Jesse Callendar as deacon Nov. 5. Shown are pastor David Luce and Callendar.

7. Pleasant Valley Church, Mendenhall, recently recognized their GAs. Shown, back row, are Sherry Anderson, Caylee Smith, Adrian Brewer, Brittany Gardner, and Paula Holyfield; front row, Michelle Looney and Kristina Looney.

8. Shirley Massey, ministry assistant for the Jackson County Association, recently celebrated 40 years of service. At the fall associational meeting, Massey was recognized by the messengers with a certificate of appreciation, an associational resolution, and a reception.

9. First Church, Eupora, held a Sunday School High Attendance day with 334 in attendance. The Sunday School classes were divided into two competing teams, led by co-directors Milton Davis and Charles McClellan. Shown is McClellan, the director of the runner-up team.

10. Sunrise Church, Petal, will have a Festival of Trees Dec. 1-2, 6:30-9 p.m., including refreshments, a hay ride, and music. Donations will be accepted for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.



6. Deacon Ordination, Ebenezer Church, Liberty



7. GAs, Pleasant Valley Church, Mendenhall



8. Massey Honored, Jackson County Association



9. Sunday School High Attendance Day, First Church, Eupora

JUST FOR THE RECORD



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

15. The GAs of First Church, Canton, recently packed 25 boxes for Operation Christmas Child, purchasing socks, purses, candy, school supplies, stuffed animals, a Christmas card, and a photo of the girls. Shown are the participants.

16. Youth from Summerland Church, Taylorsville, and Woodhaven Church, Ocean Springs, recently participated in a 24-Hour Retreat Nov. 11-12. Shown are the participants.

17. Parkway Church, Houston, ordained David Griffin and Lane Ferguson as deacons Oct. 29. Shown are Griffin, Lib Griffin, pastor Randy Rinehart, Amy Ferguson, and Ferguson.

18. The children of Sunrise Church, Petal, served lunch to the senior citizens Nov. 12. Shown are the participants.

19. Edna Church, Columbia, recently ordained Tony Humphries, left, and Vance Berry as deacons.

20. The GAs of First Church of McLaurin, Hattiesburg, recently went on a mission trip to the Deanash campus of the Mississippi Baptist Children's Village, taking craft items, making picture frames, paper flowers, bookmarks, and other items with the children.

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11. wMu, Sylva Rena Church, Water Valley

11. The wMu of Sylva Rena Church, Water Valley, held a teacher appreciation event for the teachers at Water Valley High School and Elementary School. Shown are the participants.

12. The youth of First Church, Potts Camp, participated in Servant Saturday Oct. 21, going to various places in the community and doing requested clean-up work. Shown are the youth, youth director Daniel Minor and his wife Megan, and other adults.

13. Crossgates Church, Brandon, is presenting A Crossgates Christmas Dec. 8, 7 p.m., Dec. 9-10, 3:30 and 7 p.m. This is a ticketed event; complimentary tickets are available by calling (601) 824-2775 or visiting www.crossgates.org.

14. Friendship Church, Brookhaven, is hosting Jerry Owens, director of the New Holy Land Tour at the Great Passion Play, Eureka Springs, Arkansas, Dec. 8, 7 p.m. He will be teaching and giving a slide presentation on the Tabernacle. A love offering will be taken.

16. Youth, Summerland Church, Taylorsville and Woodhaven Church, Ocean Springs

17. Deacon Ordinations, Parkway Church, Houston

18. Children, Sunrise Church, Petal

19. Deacon Ordinations, Edna Church, Columbia

12. Youth, First Church, Potts Camp

15. GAs, First Church, Canton

Bibliocipher

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ZNK CUXRJ IGTTUZ
NGZK EUA; HAZ SK OZ
NGZKZN, HKIGAYK O
ZKYZOLE UL OZ, ZNGZ
ZNK CUXQY ZNKXKUL
GXK KBOR.

PUNT YKBKT: YKBKT

Clue: C = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John One: Fifty-One.



2. Festival of Lights Celebration, Mississippi College



5. Student Representatives, William Carey University

1. The Mississippi College Career Services Center will hold Career Day on February 13, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Career Day is open to all employers from mainstream businesses, school districts, and health-care providers looking for top quality employees as well as graduate programs recruiting students. Each year, MC hosts more than 80 businesses and organizations promoting career opportunities. The Career Fair is for all Mississippi College alumni and students. For more information, contact the Career Services Center at (601) 925-3901 or email at career-center@mc.edu or Nyberg@mc.edu. Employers, visit the employer section of the website at www.mc.edu/career to register online to attend the event.
2. The 21st annual Festival of Lights celebration at Mississippi College is scheduled Nov. 30 through Dec. 2, at 7:30 p.m. nightly, in historic Provine Chapel on the college campus. The highly anticipated event signals the Christmas season for many each year with its artful presentation of music and verse. Adding ambiance to this holiday performance is the beauty and grace of the Provine Chapel (built in 1860) setting. For ticket information, call (601) 925-3440 or e-mail the MC Department of Music at music@mc.edu.
3. The William Carey University Winters School of Music will present Keyboards at Christmas December 12 at 7 p.m. in Smith Auditorium. The program will feature the piano department, the Carey Carillon, and the vocal ensemble Carpenter's Wood performing holiday favorites. The Instrumental Ensemble, which includes woodwinds, brass and strings, will accompany Carpenter's Wood. Wes Cameron,

instructor of music, directs the instrumental ensemble. Ellen Elder, assistant professor of music, directs the piano program. Kathy Vail, assistant professor of music, directs the Carey Carillon and Carpenter's Wood. Admission is free to this family friendly event. For more information call the school of music at (601) 318-6175.

4. William Carey University will run a Historical Exhibit as part of its Centennial Celebration November 8 through February 2, 2007, featuring items from the Carey Archives in the Lucile Parker Gallery located on the Hattiesburg campus. The exhibit includes photographs and portraits from all four eras of the private Christian institution, including South Mississippi College (1906), Mississippi Woman's College (1911), William Carey College (1954), and William Carey University (2006). The exhibit also includes an early gym outfit, basketball uniform, freshman beanie, baseball jersey and other memorabilia. The public is invited to view the exhibit Monday through Friday from 1 until 4 p.m. daily and by special appointment by calling (601) 318-6192. Admission is free.
5. Six William Carey University students were selected to represent the university at the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) which will be held at Southwestern Georgia University in February. The students were nominated for their work on WCU's play Bad Axe. Students selected are (clockwise from top) Krystal Sabol of Oak Grove; Paul Torquati of Picayune; Laura Jackson of Oak Grove; Abbie Hall of Wiggins; Wesley Guthrie of Purvis; and Chasity Williamson of Biloxi.

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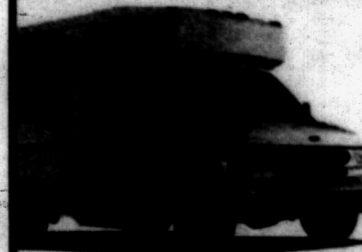
BETHESDA BAPTIST CHURCH, TERRY, MISS., IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A PART-TIME SECRETARY. Job Description for this position is as follows: basic church office duties (phone and computer skills), and some financial tasks will be included. Please send resume to:

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THE EAST BOONEVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH in Booneville, Ms is searching for a part-time Childrens Minister/Director which will span the ages from birth to 6th grade. The job description is available upon request. All applicants please submit resume to: EBBC; Childrens Minister/Director Committee, 602 East Church Street Booneville, MS 38829, ebbchurch@bell-south.net. Please call (662) 728-6036 for any additional information.

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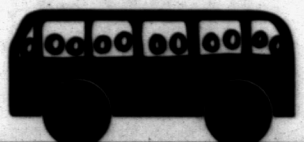
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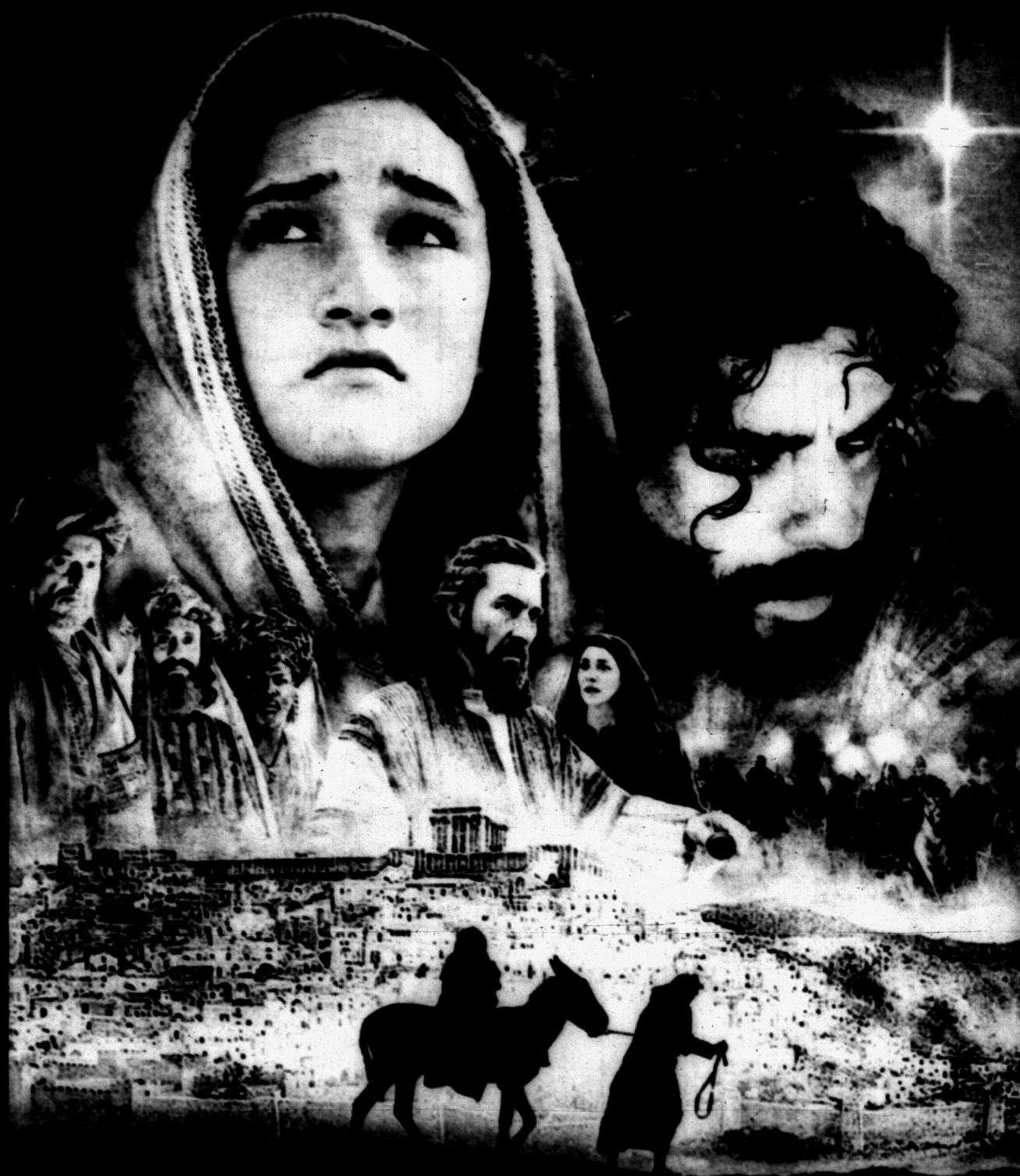
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Missouri boots churches; N.C. resets qualifications

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (BP) — Messengers to this year's Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC) annual meeting disqualified 19 churches under the convention's single-alignment stipulation approved at last year's annual meeting.

Among the 19 churches disqualified for convention membership were First Baptist churches in Jefferson City, Cape Girardeau, Independence, and Lee's Summit, each of which have ties with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or the rival Baptist General Convention of Missouri.

Missouri is unique in its approach to single alignment in that no other state convention in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has passed such a definite statement articulating its ties to the SBC.

A representative of one of the disqualified churches, Third Church in St. Louis, said the church would be praying for the Missouri Baptist Convention and requested that messengers respond in kind. It was the only public comment before messengers voted on the disqualifications.

The MBC also remains locked in a five-year legal battle with five entities whose trustees voted to make their boards self-perpetuating by amending their charters. The status of Windermere Baptist Conference Center, Missouri Baptist College, the Baptist Home retirement center, the Missouri Baptist Foundation, and Word & Way newsjournal remains uncertain as the legal maneuvering continues. The MBC legal task force provided messengers with an update.

Messengers also approved a resolution encouraging Missouri Baptist church members to exercise moral stewardship regarding the businesses they patronize, keeping in mind that Wal-Mart in August asked and received permission to join the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, pledging to give them \$25,000 annually and helping Wal-Mart to "advance diversity," or homosexuality.

Meanwhile, messengers to the annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) strengthened its membership criteria to specify churches that do not support homosexuality and do not allow homosexuals to be members until they repent.

Messengers voted by nearly a three-fourths majority to change the convention's articles of incorporation, Article VI.A.3 concerning membership. The original article stated, "A cooperating church shall be one that financially supports any program, institution, or agency of the Convention, and which is in friendly cooperation with the Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work."

The addition to the article states, "Among churches not in friendly cooperation with the Convention are churches which knowingly act to affirm, approve, endorse, promote, support or bless homosexual behavior. The Board of Directors shall apply this provision. A church has a right to appeal any adverse action taken by the Board of Directors."

Opponents of the revision did not see it as necessary. While they all agreed homosexuality is a sin and sinners need to repent, they did not feel such a rigid stance is necessary when the mechanism for membership removal already is in place.

"This is unproductive," said Nathan Parrish, pastor at Peace Haven Church in Winston-Salem and a member of the BSCNC board of directors. "We should have more conversations with each other rather than cast stones at each other."

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

Nov. 6 - Nov. 20, 2006

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Happy
Thanksgiving
from the
Baptist
Children's
Village



Members of the Greater Jackson Chapter of the Wild Turkey Federation recently presented Rory Lee, BCV Executive Director with 12 turkeys to provide Thanksgiving dinner for the The Baptist Children's Village residents. Pictured (L-R) Brian Sartain, Rory Lee, and Parker Sartain.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Live Now ... and Forever

Isaiah 55:1-13

By Arthur Story

As a student of marketing and sales techniques, I enjoy a compelling appeal for a product that is unquestionably beneficial to the consumer. That is why the text for this week's study is so interesting to me. Isaiah 55:1-13 is a wonderful marketplace styled appeal for people to receive God's offer of forgiveness and new life.

In Isaiah 55:1-5 we see God's appeal to the people to abandon their own fruitless plan and trust Him. The people had been following their own pitiful process of purchasing "what is not food" in an effort to satisfy (verse 2). In the midst of this endless circular process God intervenes with the offer to meet the people's most essential need that is so broad

in scope, so economically advantageous, and has such longevity that it is hard for the people to imagine (verses 1-3). It's an amazing offer given to all people but forced upon no one. Unlike the offers for products we see daily, this offer wasn't limited to the first 50 people to respond nor was it limited to participating stores. It was, and is, available to all who respond. Next, the fact that the offer is available at no cost to the consumer is made clear. The idea of "free" is met with great skepticism today and was surely met with at least some skepticism in Isaiah's day. Yet, that is the offer; an offer to meet spiritual thirst at no cost to the people. The burden of the cost is on the One making the offer. Like the gifts we give at Christmas,

Story

the giver bears the cost of the gift while the recipient reaps the blessing of the gift. Our spiritual thirst is satisfied without cost to us because Christ paid the cost for us (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23). Finally, we see that it is a guaranteed offer that is everlasting. It is all we will ever need (verse 7). Next, in Isaiah 55:6-7 we see God's invitation to the people to respond to His offer of forgiveness. While the offer is unlimited from the standpoint that it is for all people, it is limited in time. It will not always be available. We are accustomed to seeing commercials and print advertisements for products that contain the caveat, "for a limited time only." Car dealers, restaurants, department stores, and other businesses are constantly running such limited time offers. These two verses in Isaiah reveal that God's offer of forgiveness has a limited time and will not always be avail-

able. Sadly, some will not realize the tragedy of their delay until it is too late. My hope is that my best friend, Sean, is not one of these people. He and I had talked for a period of over a year about his need for God's forgiveness in Christ. He even moved to the point of admitting his need but remained apprehensive about accepting Christ's forgiveness. Within a few weeks of admitting his need for Christ he was killed in a car wreck. My hope is that he responded to God's offer of forgiveness in Christ before His offer to him was no longer available (Hebrews 9:27). None of us know when we will die or when Christ will return. God's offer of a new life is a limited time offer.

Finally, in Isaiah 55:8-13 we see God's guarantee that His promises will not fail. Anyone that chooses to accept God's invitation to receive His offer of forgiveness will not be disappointed. Here it's important to remember that this marketplace style offer was not given in a society that was immune to

deceptive business practices. Deception was as real then as it is now. It has been around as long as sinful humanity has been engaged in commerce. The original audience to these words from Isaiah would have had the same doubts we have today. In the light of shady business practices, God's offer of free forgiveness to all people would have seemed too good to be true to some of the original hearers the same way that it seems too good to be true to some today. As if clarifying this issue, God points out that He is not like us. His ways are not like our ways. Our motives may be impure. Our intentions may be unrighteous. Our efforts can fail to produce the desired result. His motives are not impure, His intentions are not unrighteous, and His efforts do not fail (verses 8-11).

The need to respond is urgent. Have you responded to God's offer of new life? Are you diligent to tell others about His offer?

Story is Minister of Education, First Church, Louisville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Love One Another

Hebrews 13:1-8, 12-19 (focal Hebrews 13:1)

By Cyndi Grace

I hope you have been enriched by this study of Hebrews which has reminded us strongly of who it is we serve. Hopefully, it has also encouraged you to faithfully "stay the course." Chapter 13 is brimming with admonishments from the writer to remain holy in a very unholy world. We live in an upside down world just as the Hebrew Christians did, and we need instruction of how to live in holiness, as well.

The writer begins with a call to love; what good is anything if we do not love each other in the process? If we begin to care for each other as we are instructed, the petty arguments that destroy us would all but disappear. He continues that we need to practice hospitality! I live in

the country with only one neighbor a mile away. Sometimes, I long to live in a suburban neighborhood, but as I talk to those who do, many do not even know who lives next door! We see other church members only at church where sadly too often the relationship stops. We don't know each other! Having people into our homes must be important or the writer would not have mentioned it. Our lack of hospitality indicates how selfish we have become with our time! The passage seems to extend hospitality by indicating we need to remember prisoners. Many skip this passage thinking only of criminals but could it also mean anyone who is bound? All around are those imprisoned by sin and we have the key. Are we sharing it?

Grace

Verse 4 makes a profound statement! Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Wow! This is a clarion call to us in today's society. Adultery and divorce are rampant — even within the church. From the beginning, marriage (one man/one woman) was the glue that held civilization together and was also the symbol God chose to characterize His relationship with us. In losing our lifetime commitment to those we vowed to honor and love, we have lost our commitment to God, as well. Becoming absorbed in our own personal needs, we have ignored what God has said about the seriousness of marriage. In Ephesians, Paul was teaching husbands and wives but in the middle of his discourse we find these words: "for we are members of His body. For this reason a man

will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:29-32. We are to cleave to our marriage partners as we cleave to Christ — our Bridegroom! As we have begun to think earthly marriage is about meeting our personal needs, so also we have begun to think that church is about meeting our personal needs! We must heed the warning of Hebrews! Make no mistake, God will judge!

Closely associated with this warning about the sanctity of marriage is an admonition concerning money. If we are focused on money, we are not relying upon God's provisions. I love the words, "He Himself said!" (Verse 5) He will never leave us or forsake us! Do we believe that? Either we do or we don't! That goes straight to the heart of our whole belief system!

With these admonishments, the writer gives instruction of how to begin to live accordingly

— listen to strong, solid doctrine taught by our leaders; receive God's word into your heart; praise Him through everything and pray for each other! Don't justify actions the Bible condemns. We cannot afford to "tolerate" sinful behavior, for we are called upon to be holy! (1 Peter 1:16) We must stand firm.

Christians are condemned and mocked today as the early Hebrew Christians were, but even in the battle Christ calls us to follow Him. This world is not our home (vs. 14). Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you!" Let us while we draw earthly breath "... fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (12:2-3)

God bless you in this journey!

Grace is a women's conference speaker and women's ministry director at Highland Church, Vicksburg.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted.

THE BAPTIST
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Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to crop-

ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

LifeWay: ministers behind the times on culture issues

PHOENIX (BP) — "In general, pastors are less informed about the culture in which they live than are the people in their churches," according to research released by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Research released in the November/December edition of LifeWay's Facts & Trends magazine delves into how informed Protestant ministers and laypeople see themselves in regard to 12 facets of today's culture:

- books.
- music.
- sports.
- celebrities.
- television programs.
- politics.
- magazines.
- radio and TV talk shows.
- movies.
- Internet.
- video and computer games.
- clothing and fashion.

Two studies were conducted for Facts & Trends by Ellison Research in Phoenix — a representative sample of 797 Protestant church ministers nationwide and a companion survey of 1,184 adults who attend Protestant churches at least once a month. The studies asked each group to rate whether they are very informed, somewhat informed, not very informed, or actively avoid the various facets of popular culture.

Not one of the 12 categories registered a majority of clergy or laity as very informed about culture. Pastors and churchgoers rarely try to avoid popular culture, but they tend to see themselves as relatively uninformed.

Ministers tend to stay most informed about politics, with 36% saying they are very informed about the subject and another 55% saying they are somewhat informed. This is the only category in the study about which ministers feel better informed than the laity, with 29% of all churchgoers feeling very informed about politics and another 47% feeling somewhat informed.

Pastors and laypeople feel about equally informed about sports. Twenty-four percent of clergy feel very informed about sports and another 44% are somewhat informed about this topic, with similar percentages stated by churchgoers.

On each of the other 10 topics, ministers feel significantly less informed about the culture surrounding them than do churchgoers. Twenty percent of ministers feel very informed about the Internet compared to 43% of laity; 19% of ministers feel very informed about what's on television today compared to 31% of laity; 18% are very informed about books compared to 27% of laity; and 16% are very informed about movies today compared to 24% of laity.

Pastors rarely feel very informed about the other culture topics on the survey: radio and TV talk shows (12% versus 20% among laity); music (11% versus 28% among laity); magazines

How informed are you about popular culture?

Clergy compared to laity by topic:

	CLERGY	LAITY		CLERGY	LAITY
Politics			Talk Shows (radio & TV)		
Very informed	36%	29%	Very informed	12%	20%
Somewhat informed	55%	47%	Somewhat informed	46%	46%
Not very informed	7%	16%	Not very informed	34%	26%
Actively avoid	2%	6%	Actively avoid	8%	7%
Sports			Music		
Very informed	24%	24%	Very informed	11%	28%
Somewhat informed	44%	39%	Somewhat informed	46%	51%
Not very informed	26%	28%	Not very informed	39%	18%
Actively avoid	6%	10%	Actively avoid	4%	3%
Internet			Magazines		
Very informed	20%	43%	Very informed	11%	17%
Somewhat informed	51%	46%	Somewhat informed	43%	47%
Not very informed	22%	9%	Not very informed	41%	31%
Actively avoid	7%	2%	Actively avoid	4%	5%
Television			Clothing & Fashion		
Very informed	19%	31%	Very informed	7%	16%
Somewhat informed	56%	50%	Somewhat informed	34%	48%
Not very informed	20%	17%	Not very informed	52%	30%
Actively avoid	5%	3%	Actively avoid	7%	7%
Books			Video & Computer Games		
Very informed	18%	27%	Very informed	5%	16%
Somewhat informed	60%	52%	Somewhat informed	24%	48%
Not very informed	21%	18%	Not very informed	54%	30%
Actively avoid	1%	3%	Actively avoid	17%	7%
Movies			Celebrities		
Very informed	16%	24%	Very informed	4%	10%
Somewhat informed	51%	46%	Somewhat informed	28%	41%
Not very informed	27%	23%	Not very informed	54%	36%
Actively avoid	6%	7%	Actively avoid	15%	13%

(11% versus 17% among laity); clothing and fashion (seven percent versus 16% among laity); video and computer games (five percent versus 16% among laity); and celebrities (four percent versus 10% among laity).

The areas where the greatest gaps exist between pastors and churchgoers are in video and computer games, fashion, and celebrities. Fifty-nine percent of ministers are uninformed about fashion compared to 37% of the people in the pews; 69% are uninformed about celebrities compared to 49% of laity; and 71% are uninformed about video and computer games compared to 49% of laity.

Among ministers, there were no dramatic differences among denominational groups (Methodists, Baptists, etc.). In general, mainline ministers tend to feel slightly more informed about books and movies than do evangelical pastors, but the other findings are quite similar.

There are some differences according to age, however. Younger ministers (under 45) feel more informed about sports, the Internet, music, clothing and fashion, celebrities, and video and computer games than do older ministers. However, this is also true among the people attending their churches; younger churchgoers feel much more

informed about these areas and others in today's culture than do older people.

Among the laity, how informed they are about the culture does not vary significantly according to how long people have attended their current church, whether they are involved in a mainline or evangelical congregation, how often they attend, or whether they are in a volunteer leadership position within the church.

Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research, pointed out that the survey raises the question of whether churches are having an impact on how people interact with culture.

"There's a long-term debate within Christendom about what is an appropriate level of involvement in popular culture. Some Christians believe separation from the world is part of godly behavior, while others believe involvement in the world is necessary in order to reach out to the world," Sellers observed.

"Either way, one might logically expect church involvement to change how a person looks at culture — either becoming more involved in order to have more effective outreach or becoming less involved as they seek to lead a less worldly lifestyle — but the data show no difference in cultural awareness according to how frequently people attend church, how long they've been there or whether they are in a leadership position," Sellers said.

"This raises the question of how much churches actually impact how people live their daily lives," he pointed out.

Sellers also noted that one criticism people often have about churches is that they are out of touch with the world around them.

"The data show ministers are, generally speaking, not all that informed about the culture in which they seek to minister. The people in the pews feel much more informed about the Internet, movies, videogames, and other expressions of popular culture than do their pastors.

"People are definitely impacted by the culture they consume — the websites they visit or the music they listen to, for instance. Pastors need to be informed about what's out there in order to understand how the culture is influencing the people they are trying to reach," Sellers said.

Facts & Trends magazine is a publication of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Nashville. The magazine, published six times per year, is designed to assist pastors, church staff, and denominational leaders in their roles of ministry by informing them about LifeWay resources and how they relate to current issues in Christian ministry.

For a free subscription by mail, send name and mailing address to facts&trends@lifeway.com.